May 2026

#4

HOPSPOT

Puerto Rico Art Community

Written & Edited by Kevin Del Valle

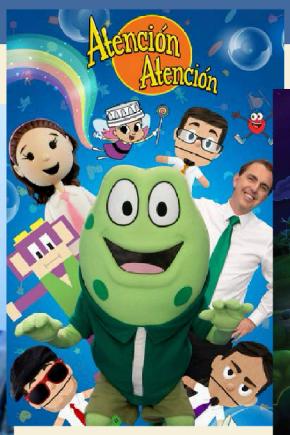
AI
SAY NO TO
Artificial Intelligence
&
PICK UP A PENCIL

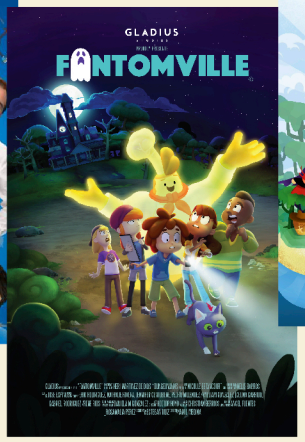
HOPSPOT
NEXT STOP...ANIMATION

Animation in Puerto Rico

The animation scene in Puerto Rico has steadily grown over the years, becoming an active and close knit community. From artists in the diaspora working in big studios, educational institutions providing better resources for students, to projects over the years like “Atención Atención”, “Fantomville” and “Rockolandia” have all contributed to getting us where we are today.

When given the opportunity, we swing for the fences. Always determined to show that it’s very possible for entire animated productions to be done here, and they have.





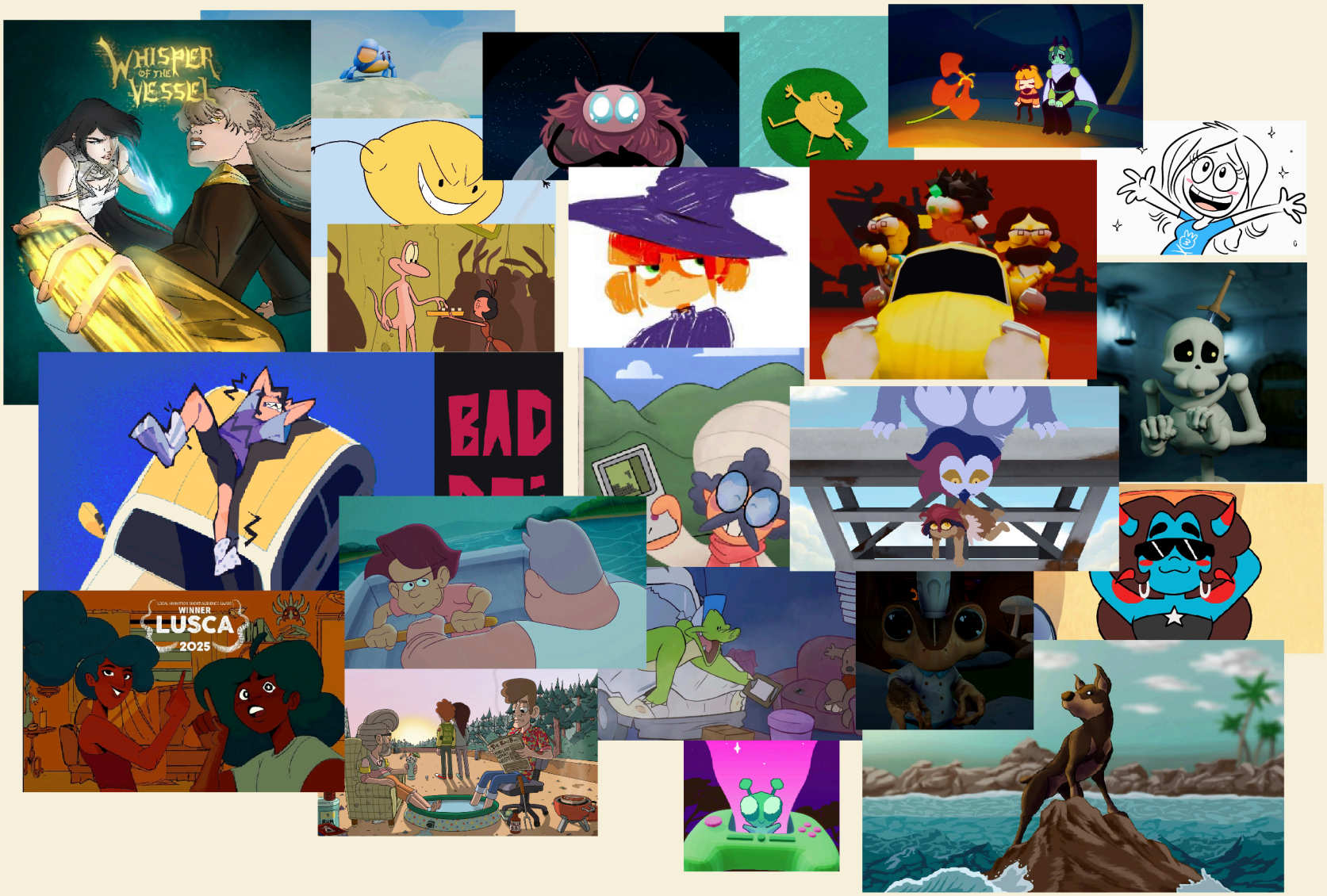
Gladius Studios in Puerto Rico Achieve Historic Unionization with TAG - 2023

Fantomville premier - 2018

Festival de Animacion y Video Juegos - 2016

Rockolandia team - 2024

In the meantime, we continue our own creative works, help each other, and collaborate. Pushing for shared goals rather than continuing to encourage individualism, which in an age where real artists are being pushed out in favor of low quality products made by Artificial Intelligence, it’s now more important than ever to have strong art communities.



Hecho Aquí

The images above are a collage of projects done by many puertorican artists throughout the years, and still being worked on today. They're artists with a deep desire to tell their stories, to rebel against a system that feels like it's designed to fail and discourage us. There's a strong hunger for new creative projects, to reject trends for algorithmic attention, and to embrace sincerity. Make stories true to you! Stories that defy the current state of the world, stories that make people feel and retain the emotions they find when experiencing your art.

In order for individual artists to survive under the dead weight of capitalism, community is crucial. Animation is a very collaborative field, so seeking out a support system of like-minded individuals that also want to make art will create a strong ecosystem where we are able to continue our passion projects.

In this issue of Hopspot, you'll see what can happen when artists come together to accomplish a shared goal. From a big studio production like Rockolandia, to small but mighty indie projects like the ones featured today. Hopefully, these artists can inspire you to pursue your own art ventures.

ROCKOLANDIA

Made with lots of love and care, Rockolandia is a 2D animated family series fully produced in Puerto Rico. Local Animators and Artists got the opportunity to work on something magical. The team was determined to achieve such a historic production. Alberto Carrión and Cristina Carrión brought the theater play from the 80's and modernized it for a new generation of kids and parents. Already winning 4 Emmys and growing their audience on social media, Rockolandia continues to entertain a young audience in a time where they desperately need media catered to them. Let's have a closer look and talk with the director herself.

Cristina Carrión: I am the Director/Showrunner, Producer, and Head Writer for "Rockolandia: Las Cabritas". My family are the original creators of the 1980's Rockolandia, so I grew up alongside the stage productions. In many ways, I can credit Rockolandia as one of my initial exposures to theatre, which is what I ended up studying and dedicating my early professional life to. I worked in theatre as a director, producer, writer and actor for many years in NYC prior to coming up with the idea of adapting Rockolandia into an animated series.

Originally, Rockolandia started in the 1980's as a collection of LP's and theatrical productions which told classical children's stories through a Hispanic lens with Rock and Roll music. Stage productions continued to be produced throughout the island until the early 2000's.

The new "Rockolandia: Las Cabritas" is an adaptation of the most popular Rockolandia story, "Las Siete Cabritas y el Lobo", to an animated musical series in Spanish. The story follows 7 little goats who live happily in the forest with their friends and family, but they must beware of the Big Bad Wolf, who is always looking for ways to eat them. Even though Rockolandia is its own world, it is deeply inspired by the island where it was created, Puerto Rico.

Q: Rockolandia's popularity and accolades continue to grow. The show helped solidify an incredible animation scene in the island and has inspired other upcoming animators/artists. **Now that the dust has settled and the show has been out for a year, have you been able to fully grasp the impact of Rockolandia?**

A: It certainly has helped bring to light and solidify the amazing talent for animation that exists on the island. When I started this journey, my goal was to produce it 100% in Puerto Rico. I knew that a lot of elements for the production could be achieved here... music, writing, acting, production and post-production professionals. However, my biggest question was whether the animation could be achieved in Puerto Rico. I was amazed to find that not only were there animation studios on the island, but that there was an array of talented animators.

Without an animation industry to support them, many were forced to leave the island in search of opportunities. The production of Rockolandia helped prove what can happen when you give that artistic community an opportunity to come together and work on something they believe in.

Q: There's a whole new generation of puertoricans discovering your music through this new Rockolandia series. **How does it feel having parents that grew up with the theatre play, now watching the show with their children?**

A: Alberto Carrión: It's a big thrill to see how the children today enjoy and learn the songs of Rockolandia. It's wonderful to see how this can be enjoyed by all generations. The kids who watched it in the 80's are now parents who are sharing it with their children. We receive lots of posts from parents about their children watching and singing the songs.
Not only puertorican kids; we've received many posts from South America of kids watching the shows and their parents thanking us for creating it.

Q: With children mostly being on YouTube, consuming whatever content pops up, **how important is it for you to be able to work on art that they can enjoy instead?**

A: Cristina Carrión: From the start, Alberto and I said that we wanted to do a world class animated series that would not compromise on quality. I grew up through the golden years of Disney movies and other amazing kids' content and IPs. To see the options kids have nowadays was something truly shocking to me.

There certainly are quality shows and IPs, but they are few and far between. Therefore, when coming up with the concept for the new adaptation of Rockolandia, I drew inspiration from movies and shows I loved as a child, such as Home Alone, The Goonies, Looney Tunes, etc. I noticed that a lot of the content I loved as a child was content that depicted the kids as heroes, and realized that this was something that makes a child feel respected and capable, so I wanted to bring that element to the show. In the original play, Mamita actually rescues the kids, so this was a key change we made to the adaptation, which also served as a repeatable formula in order to continue producing more episodes.

Art from young fan

Art from young fan

Zi-Zi's Journey

A remarkable 2D animated student film. Zi-Zi's Journey will serve as a shining example of an excellently executed capstone project for animation students in Puerto Rico. Zi-Zi's Journey is officially a 2026 NATAS Suncoast Chapter Student Production Award winner in the Animation/Graphics/Special Effects category!

Zi-Zi's Journey is a story that follows a flightless bee, named Zi-Zi, who gets swept away from her hive after a terrifying storm. She embarks on an adventure to return to her home. Along the way, she meets a timid dragonfly named Fly...who's afraid of heights! Together, they travel far and wide, through colorful and treacherous environments as their bond grows stronger with each obstacle in their way!

A CLOSER LOOK!

@Solisvalen_

Hello! My name is **Aida Rodriguez.** I'm a Storyboard Artist, Business owner and the Director behind our student short film, **Zi-Zi's Journey!**

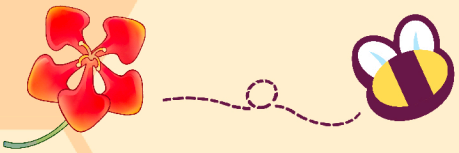
This is the first project I ever directed, so it was initially rather scary! This experience has taught me so much about the importance of collaboration, guiding other artists and communicating ideas effectively. It challenged my time management skills and adaptability to unforeseen situations that came our way. It requires a lot of responsibility, time and dedication to be able to unite everyone together under a common goal!

Q: So much hard work went into making this beautiful 2D short film. **Do you feel like you and your team have grown more confident thanks to this experience?**

A: Definitely! My team has grown more confident and experienced thanks to this endeavor. As for myself, While it definitely wasn't easy, it's an invaluable experience that helped me grow not only as a leader, but as a person as well. I am more assertive and confident now in myself and my abilities thanks to directing this project.

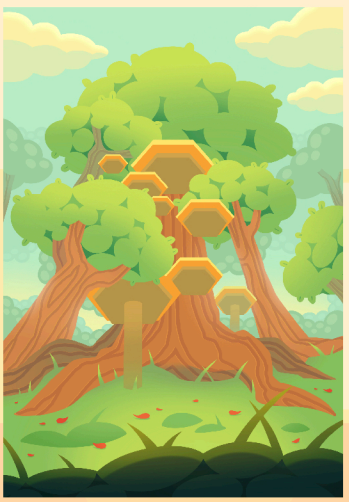
Q: There's a special kind of energy when you're making your final student film that can't be replicated later on. **What's something you'd like to see more of when students are working on their animated capstone projects?**

A: In a world that will often discourage you and your efforts, my deepest wish is that more students gain the courage and resilience that comes with creating stories and art. That they realize the inner strength they already possess, and hold onto the resolve to see something they truly care about to the end, in spite of the odds. And if you are fortunate enough to find people who will support your dreams and aspirations, keep them close to your heart—don't let them go.

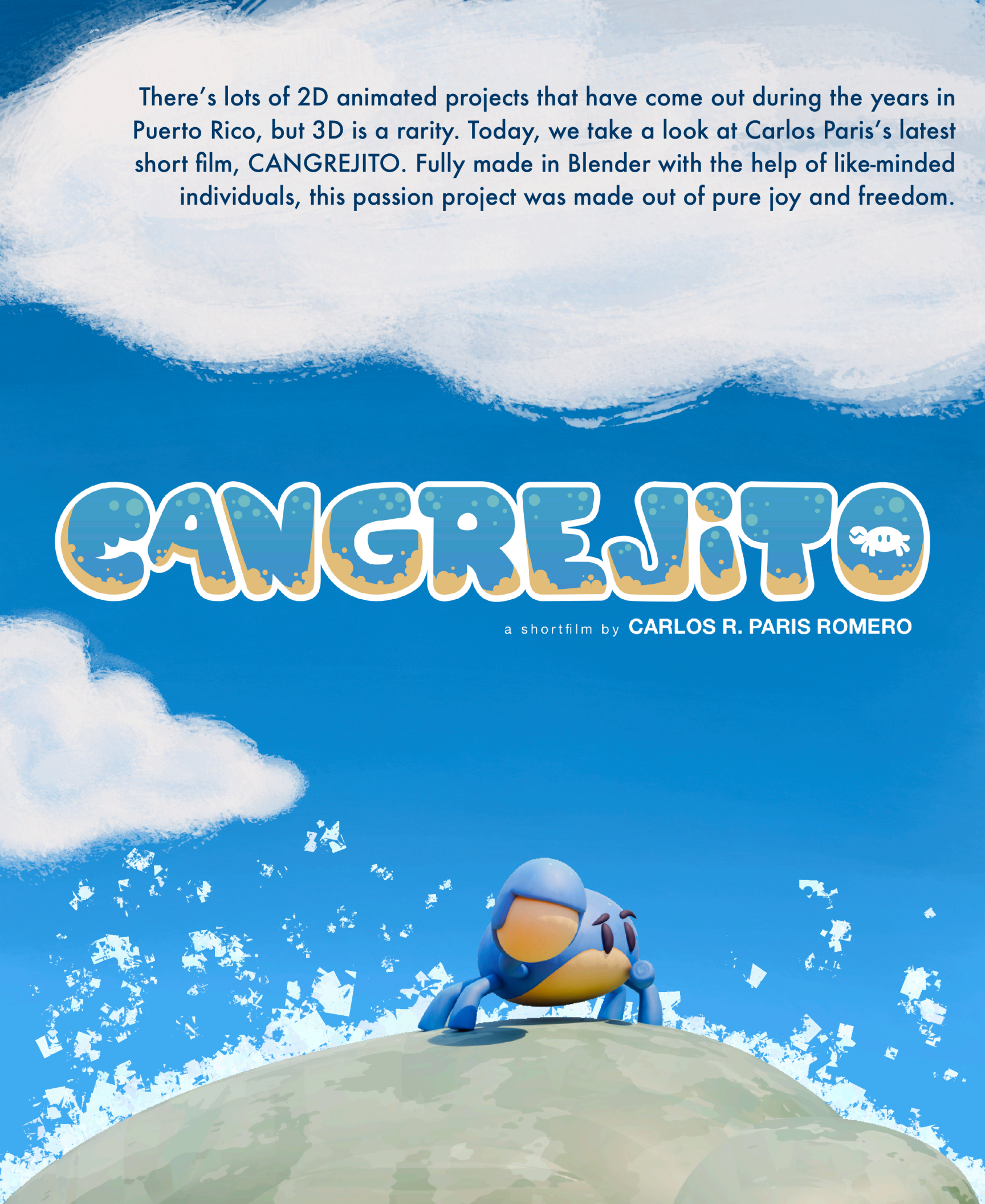


Q: The music is absolutely beautiful in Zi-Zi's Journey. **How important was it for you that both visuals and audio went together seamlessly?**

A: When I started boarding the sequences, it was absolutely imperative that the music and visuals would be intrinsically connected to each other. When I first sat down with our composer, Alana Rodriguez, one of the first things I discussed with her was that I wanted the music to be naturally integrated alongside the animation, with the emotional context of the scene and its characters always in mind. But to also take it a step further—letting the music build the atmosphere and energy of the scene, from setting the tone, down to complementing the characters' reactions and micro-expressions in sync with the melody. Thanks to Alana's fantastic performance, the execution of this idea was brought to life beyond everyone's expectations. We hope you enjoy listening to it as much as we do!



There's lots of 2D animated projects that have come out during the years in Puerto Rico, but 3D is a rarity. Today, we take a look at Carlos Paris's latest short film, CANGREJITO. Fully made in Blender with the help of like-minded individuals, this passion project was made out of pure joy and freedom.



A CLOSER LOOK

@pixelflattop

My name is **Carlos Paris.** I am a 3D Generalist who has worked on a variety of unique projects, each with its own style and variation. At my core, I am an educator, sharing and teaching different ways to create art in a free and lasting way so that everyone can become an artist in their own right.

My short film is about a little blue crab trying to overcome an obstacle in his way. It's about the fact that life throws stuff at us, and, while we are afraid of taking chances, it still pushes us to do it. This film is especially meaningful to me because I had the opportunity to collaborate with incredibly talented artists here on the island, helping ignite a creative spark in others.

It was important for me to complete this project since it would be a proper display of all the skills I've acquired during the years as a 3D generalist. At the same time, it's meant to inspire more people in the 3D space to pursue their own short films. Hopefully, our small community can keep growing as more projects get made.

Q: The short film is fully in 3D, a rare thing to see on the island. **What resources did you use to make Cangrejito?**

A: Well, one of the main resources we used was a program called "Blender". It was one of the main tools we fully used to create the short. One of the challenges I gave myself was trying to make short fully in blender, and we did.

Q: One of the end goals when making a short film is to get it shown at film festivals. Cangrejito is set to participate in a lot of them during the year. **What do you hope people take from your art after watching it in these events?**

A: I hope that people can see this as a call to action or a beacon of inspiration that, if you have a story you want to develop or make, do it. Don't hold back, chase that idea.

Q: Everything in this short was made in-house, including the music and sound design. **Do you feel local musicians and artists should seek each other more to participate in these passion projects here in PR?**

A: YES! Absolutely. Having the music be custom made for this short only made it even more impacting than looking for a royalty-free one or free-used. It gives it a different feeling that makes it more special, too. Alana Rodriquez provided us with the beautiful tropical music heard throughout the short.

Q: Lastly, this project being in 3D is inspiring. **What would you say to 3D artists in PR that would like to achieve something similar, but maybe don't know where to start because they lack resources or community?**

A: Don't be afraid of exploring and finding new ways of doing something new. Sometimes it's hard but, bit by bit, we are seeing communities being formed and resources being shared. It's important to be part of communities, to find other 3D artists and learn from them, to bounce ideas and be a little noisy, to watch behind-the-scenes, download models and figure out "how did they do it?". If you're consistent and disciplined, it's simple. All it takes is a little bit of time.

LAUNDROMAX

LaundroMAX is about an ordinary laundromat with extraordinary mishaps that are focused on a cast of four characters. The show embraces larger-than-life scenarios that come into play as the story develops. It incorporates sci-fi and historically influenced adventures that range from underground Mayan temples, to cosmic entities, all tucked away in the small rural town where these characters reside. From Matt's outward apathy, to Elijah's deep wisdom masked by a childish demeanor, the project explores a deep web of interpersonal relationships that unfold in unexpected ways. For other characters, like Church, it's about overcoming fears and becoming his own person, while others, like Fergus, it's about representing complex social and personal issues. Though the stakes are high, LaundroMAX makes it clear that the heart of its story lies in these characters' personal journeys.

A CLOSER LOOK!

@laundromax201

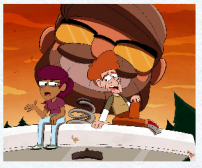
My name is **Pedro Melendez**, I am a Storyboard Artist and the creator of LaundroMAX I've always loved storytelling. I've always loved movies, comic books, and animation. There was always a part of me that wanted to create stories. I would grab papers and draw out sequences of things that could have happened, without knowing if that kind of thing had a name. Essentially, I had been making comics from a very young age.

When I was studying animation in university, I was still trying to figure myself out, like "what do I really want to do?" LaundroMAX came from a time where a lot of things were happening in my personal life.I'd moved into a new place with my family and we hadn't installed any laundry machines yet, so we went to a laundromat and, somehow, my brain couldn't stop creating an idea of something. I couldn't stop looking around, picturing the setting and the kinds of characters that would come in. Eventually, I sat down, and my dad leaned close to me while waiting for our clothes to finish washing, and said: "Hmm, this looks like a fun place for the idea of a show." Boom. That's where I was like, oh gosh, OK, that's a sign. So, I went home, grabbed a notebook, a sketchbook, and that's where I began working on that idea. Later on, I'd get to present the project for my Capstone class, which then became the greatest journey of my life, despite realizing how unexpectedly long it would actually take to become reality. Just a simple kind of story of misfits living in a small town while outside forces take them on exciting adventures, growing deeper bonds with each other as they go.

Q: LaundroMAX has become a project where a lot of animators got to hone their skills, diversify their portfolio and offer some small job security. **Did you ever expect LaundroMAX to have such an impact on the PR animation scene?**

A: Absolutely not. When this all began, it was more of a cool idea for our final student project (2018). We'd started something, so, let's finish it! There would be moments where the project would've been canned or delayed by a lot but, somehow, something in me just wanted to continue it, whatever it'd take at my own pace. I didn't expect that it'd become something that would help other people, years later, in such a big way. I'm thankful for my hard-working job that allows me to pay rent, and save the rest to commission my wonderful team.

I wanted to make sure everyone is actually covered, you know? It's just something that really changed the focus. It almost makes you feel like a dad, or, I don't know... I want to make sure they're taken care of. Really, I'm honored that I was given this chance, and I've got to credit Kevin and Christian for guiding me and making this more than just a personal baby project. It's become something that helps others, and made me feel like I was actually making a difference. Maybe it's not a "cosmic event" level of difference, but it's a difference that will still help others work, hone their skills, and help on the financial side. I hope the team knows just how much I've learned from them, and how much I enjoy being with them. Even though I can be a bit socially awkward in how I express myself, I've always enjoyed working with them and seeing the team help each other. It is truly a blessing.



Q: This started out as a student film and then became a passion project. **What does LaundroMAX mean to you now?**

A: It means a lot to me still. It's been eight years, and that means eight years of slowly, but surely, working on something I'm passionate about. I wish I would've had more wisdom and knowledge to get this done quicker, but I'm still happy with how the journey has gone to this day. This project means a lot to me, even moreso after knowing what it's done to others. I started a story, and I plan to finish it.

Try, try again

Q: In this industry, a lot of people come and go, but only few truly remain and seek to inspire for a better future. **What's one thing you'd tell an aspiring animator starting their first project?**

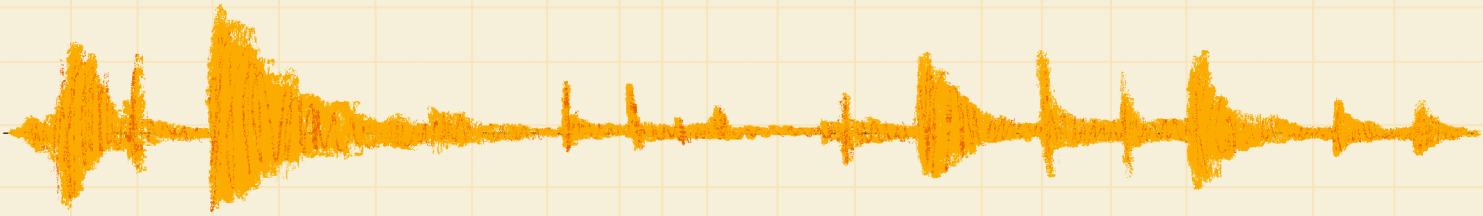
Finished, not perfect. You just have to start something.
I will tell you this with confidence: you will feel regret not finishing it. Don't fear failure. I think it's better if you fail a lot during the process, because you learn, and still manage to finish. It's important to have people that also encourage you, push you, and keep you on the steady road to finish. Let me tell you... once you finish that project, not only do you expand on an idea, but also get to see something you've imagined finally become a reality.

Right now, actually, I'm in a position where, OK, yes, I'm working a job that has nothing to do with what I studied, but that doesn't stop me from doing what I enjoy, which is mainly storyboarding. Find peace and don't let that inner fire get extinguished because of burnout. This world is overwhelming, so be careful. Don't let others' progress frustrate you, instead, understand that everyone is on their own journey and let yourself be inspired by that.
You're on your own journey.

Music in motion

Music is a running theme in today's Hopspot because of how important it is to the featured projects. Crafted with great care and attention, helping to push the visual narrative and help us create deeper memories to these characters. If you're an animator, you've probably heard two seconds of the same audio on loop for hours just to get the timing right. Maybe you're a storyboarder and created an entire fight scene in your head whilst listening to a banger track.

Let us celebrate these musicians today and get two different perspectives. One is an Industry veteran, Alberto Carrión (Rockolandia) and the other is a passionate novice, Alana Rodriguez (Zizi's Journey, Cangrejito).



Q: You composed the amazing music, but would also help the animators time the choreography of the characters. **How much fun did you have whilst composing the music for a modern version of Rockolandia?**

A: Creating the new music for Rockolandia was a wonderful challenge. The original music had a special magical quality that I did not know if I could achieve the second time around. The original music was written when I was much younger and I wasn't sure that I could recapture that magic in my 70's. To my surprise, the child inside me blossomed once more and it was as if I had never stopped writing Rockolandia songs. The magic was still there.

Q: Rockolandia is a musical series, with each episode having one song that helps the narrative. **What's your relationship with music as an artist when it involves big projects like Rockolandia?**

A: I always approach music with a lot of respect. I've never settled with "good enough". If it's just "good enough"... I have failed my mission. I have to fall in love with the song and not let go of it until I am totally satisfied with it. I tend to be my own harshest critic.

Q: Music has the ability to evoke emotions and create long lasting memories. **In a world that fights for our attention, how do you approach music so it leaves a positive and memorable impact on the audience?**

A: When I'm writing songs for kids, I try to make simple melodies with memorable hooks and easy-to-learn lyrics. It's very important to read and understand what's happening in the story before you write the songs. In other words, the story lets you know what it really wants and needs. Then...the combination of the story plus the songs create the real magic.

Universal Language

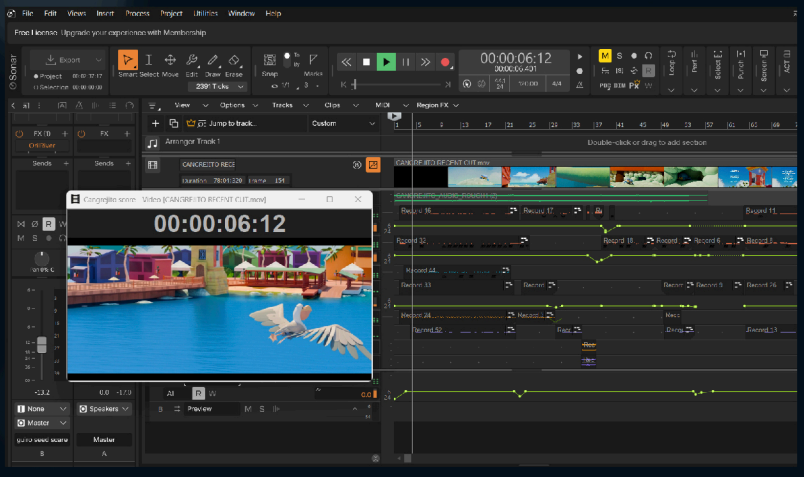
Music is a universal language that feeds our souls and helps us tell our stories. It's also an effective tool to teach us patterns when learning a new skill.

Alana Rodriguez got the opportunity to collaborate with friends as a musician for their projects featured in today's Hopspot: **Zi-Zi's Journey and Cangrejito.**

Q: How did it feel to do something you consider a hobby and apply it to these projects, and how did they differ in sound?

Oh, wow- where to begin! Despite all the words I could think of, I think astonished is somewhat close to how I feel. I'm a Language student/Translator by day, and a creative soul by night, which is how I'd say that music found its way to me.

I fully committed to plunging myself into the world of making my own music just last year in 2025, and had many ups and downs. I really wanted to test the limits of what free software could do, so I slowly evolved from simple programs into more complex DAWs to learn. I loved sharing my progress with my friends, and that's how the idea of having me try to make some music for their projects began.



Zi-Zi's Journey and Cangrejito were the perfect pair of projects for me to try a lot of sounds and styles! From one pivot to the other, I had the chance to really learn about what each environment needed, and how music could propel the stories they were trying to tell.

I loved having the chance to try orchestral sounds for Zi-Zi's Journey; the warm, soft, piano played well with the rich strings and all the other instruments that gave the world a very heartfelt and charming identity. For Cangrejito, I worked with sounds closer to home. Puertorican musicality mixed with a soft bossa nova and playful marimba led the beachy atmosphere and more linear story.

Seeing the life they have now through my musical production is an opportunity I am more than honored and grateful for. This is only the beginning of my journey!

Missed your last stops?

Check out previous Hopspot issues bellow

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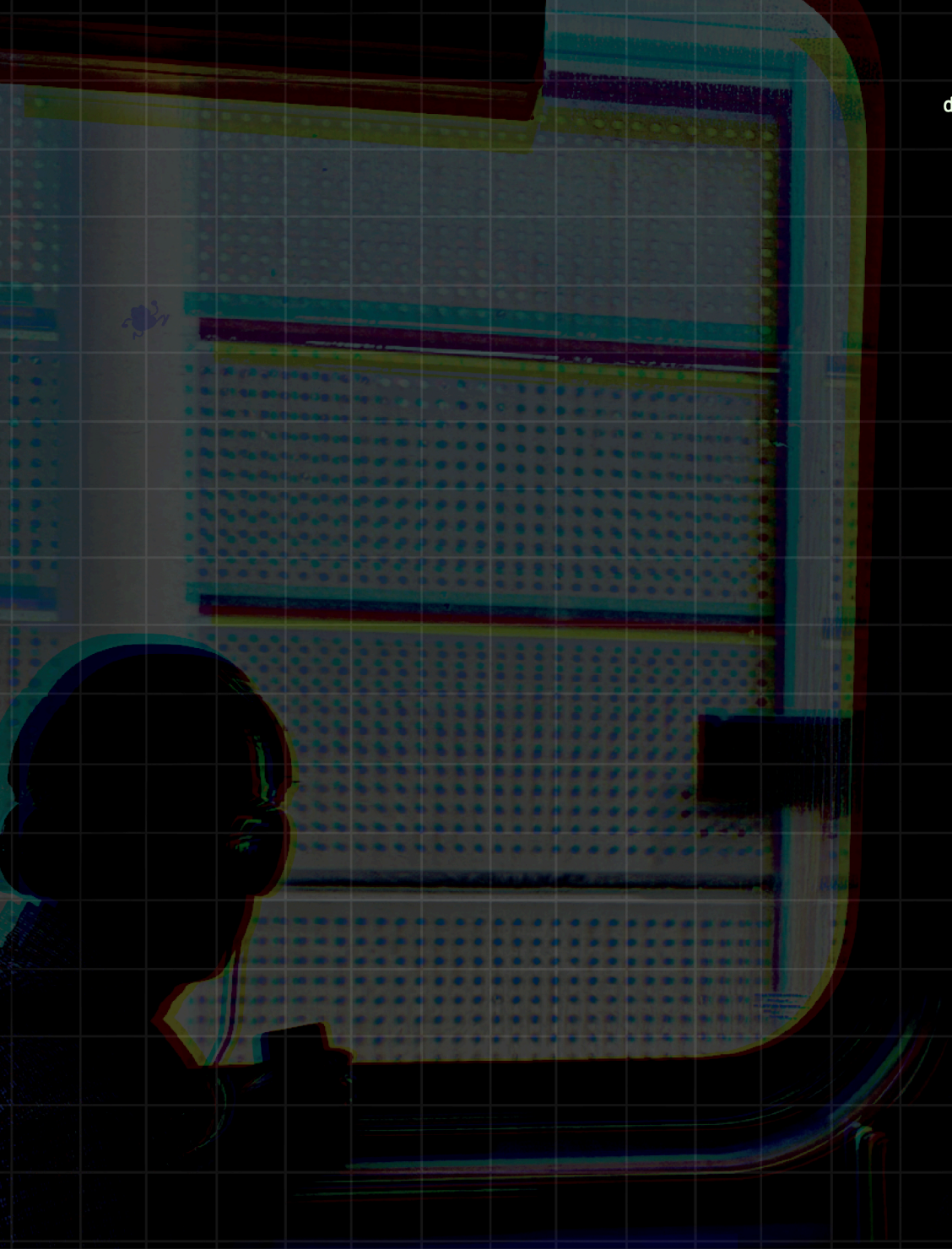

Digital Zine highlighting artists and documenting our efforts in Puerto Rico.

THANKS FOR READING...STAY GOLD

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